The Saturday Review of Literature

VOL. XX NO. 4 NEW YORK, SATURDAY, MAY 20, 1939 TEN CENTS A COPY

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Underwood & Underwood
Mary R. Beard

No Comfort for Optimists

BY ELMER DAVIS

Charles A. Beard

JUST in case ever-returning spring should infuse the populace with an unwarranted optimism, along comes the third volume* of the Beards' famous history, covering the period from the "golden glow" in the last years of Coolidge down to the winter just past. The old title is only a sub-title now, and with good reason; a history of the past dozen years could be called, at best, "The Undulations of American Civilization." If some of that civilization's components have an upward trend (the condition of American letters, it is a pleasure to learn, is "in brilliant contrast with the degeneration of Roman letters in the fourth and fifth centuries") these components are unfortunately the imponderables; likely to be of secondary interest, till we can get the ponderables better taken care of.

These are not the Beards' conclusions; they seldom try to draw conclusions, though they cannot refrain from chanting a brief hymn of democratic optimism at the very end. But these are the conclusions apt to be drawn by anybody who reads this book through—no trivial feat. The layman must feel a little diffident before such a monument of industry and erudition, erected by one of the most distinguished of American historians, with a collaborator of tested capacity; yet candor compels the expression of some doubt if very many citizens will ever read all of these 949 pages.

But every citizen ought to read the last chapter, which will remind him that Madison, Jefferson, Webster, and others of the Founding and Buttressing Fathers foresaw our present difficulties, and knew that something would have to be done about them. He had better read as well the first five hundred pages, in which the political and economic history of the years since 1927 is presented in such a close-packed but lucid summary as is nowhere else available. There follow some four hundred pages of social, intellectual, and esthetic review and commentary, which tie in with the earlier chapters to make what progressive educators call an "integrated course." Here is a compendium of information, often useful, which most of us have forgotten; its value as commentary is more open to question.

That American literature is viewed from an angle, judged by a single criterion—its increase in what is known as "social awareness"—is fair enough; that increase has been the outstanding feature of American letters in recent years; the merest adventure or mystery story nowadays rests on presuppositions undreamed of in 1927. But when the Beards explain the six-year run of the stage version of "Tobacco Road" on the ground that emotions (civic emotions, as the context makes clear) "were stirred by revelations of degradation," some of us cannot help losing faith in this whole analysis. Evidently there are large areas of human nature of which such high-minded scientists as the Beards are unaware—happily unaware, for those areas are deplorable; still they exist, and failure to perceive them somewhat vitiates an interpretation of the behavior and sentiments of the American people. This would no doubt be a better and a happier land if John Dos Passos were a more typical American than Billy Rose, if Frances Perkins were a more representative embodiment of American womanhood than Sally Rand. . . . But to return to fields in which the Beards are more at home.

The essence of Dr. Beard's historical approach is a sense of change and flux and movement, a realization that Time (unincorporated) marches on. The platforms of both parties in 1932, he observes, implied a belief "that American history had been closed; that the future, near and distant, would repeat some period of the past unnamed." No such illusion will be retained by his readers. If sometimes he seems a champion of collectivism, it is rather that he recognizes that in fact American economy has become increasingly collective (or interdependent, if you prefer); and he cites the authority of Aristotle, as well as the evidence of history, in support of the doctrine that every nation always has been and always must be part collectivist and part individualist, in however varying proportion.

He is of course an economic determinist, but a much less rigorous one than Madison or Webster or Marx; he merely shares the belief of the Founding Fathers in the interpenetration of politics and economics, and despises above everything else the faith of orthodox economists in the automatic functioning of economic processes. (That the most rugged individualists seldom let those processes function automatically if they could help it is a conclusion which he amply documents.) As a corollary, he is skeptical of the cure of economic ills by the restoration of international trade, and pins his confidence on a political-economic system which he prefers to call continentalism rather than isolationism.

A man with such predilections can have a lot of fun with the history of 1927-1938. In two hundred pages he reports the decline and fall of Coolidge prosperity, plus the Congressional investigations which eventually threw so much light on its mechanics. You see what happened and you see why; after which it is a little hard to believe that all we need is a Taft or a Vandenberg or a Dewey to bring back the good old days. It can't happen here again—not like that. Dr. Beard gives Hoover more credit than the average man will allow him; so far from doing nothing, he attacked the depression with measures that formed "a reasoned pattern within the framework of his experience and his social philosophy"—a philosophy whose

Next Week

THE LETTERS OF RALPH WALDO EMERSON
Edited by RALPH L. RUSH
Reviewed by Townsend Scudder

THE NEW DEAL IN OLD ROME
By H. J. HASKELL
Reviewed by Elmer Davis

* *AMERICA IN MIDPASSAGE. Volume III of The Rise of American Civilization. By Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard. Drawings by Wilfred Jones. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939. $3.50.*

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major premise was that prosperity is something that trickles down from the top. "He broke precedents and he made precedents"; once the principle was established that government could interfere with "automatic" economic processes to help the rich, it was only a question of time, in a country with universal suffrage, when it would have to do something for the poor too.

For not enough trickled down from the top; after March 4, 1933, something else had to be done. Here you will find a brilliant epitome of the First New Deal, with infrequent but illuminating comments whose significance the authors themselves seem later to forget. The Banking Act of 1933 was conservative, it "drove no money changers from the temple." NIRA and AAA "conformed to the economic theory of hard-bitten practitioners," representing substantially the demands of organized industry and organized agriculture; the failure of one, the purely temporary and palliative success of the other, was the failure not of theorists but of practical men. There were tactical as well as substantial oversights; in that year when everybody was calling on the government for rescue, no "constitutional doubts" were expressed out loud, and if the administration's program could have been brought before the Supreme Court at once, "the atmospheric pressure of calamity" might have made it constitutional.

But the tension relaxed when the immediate emergency had passed; and then it became evident that there was no "program to continue, expand, and apply effectively the recognition accorded to the collective character of American economy," no "scheme of tested thought and moral principle to support such a program," and no men who could have made the program work if there had been a program. Its failure to work encouraged the Supreme Court in an "attempt to govern," as it had sometimes governed before; but the people pronounced in November 1936 that they were satisfied with Roosevelt. Thus emboldened, in his Second Inaugural he "rejected an argument buttressed by fifty centuries of history"

Drawings on this page by Wilfred Jones, from "America in Midpassage."

—the argument that the poor we have always with us—and proposed to try to solve "the tragic conflict between the ideal and the real."

Within a few months, when the President's support had already been divided by the particular way he chose to attack the problem of the Court, it appeared that the real was more stubborn and more obtrusive than optimists had supposed. And from this point on the Beards' narrative shows signs of haste. They mention the recession that began in the middle of 1937, but have little to say about the light it throws on omissions made in 1933, when almost anything might have been done with popular approval. (Only another catastrophe of comparable magnitude would make those things possible, now.) Yet hundreds of pages farther back they had characterized the First New Deal in language whose relevance has become pointed. It was not a revolution and was not intended so to be; it merely propped up everything by "placing the credit of the government, that is the collective public, under disaster-ridden private enterprises, by adding billions to the national debt . . . and by postponing, in an effort to avoid, a day of reckoning." By "tying private interests more closely into a single network and making the fate of each increasingly dependent on the fate of all."

Exactly; and there we are. Today, the tragic conflict between the ideal and the real is farther from solution than it was in January 1937; the New Deal has kept us going, but by expedients that cannot be kept up forever; and no alternative has yet been suggested except a return to the substance, if not all the details, of the Coolidge Golden Glow. Against such a return there is, besides other arguments, the conclusive one that it would not work. Nowhere will you find the evidence that it would not work, and the evidence of the New Deal's many failures to work, better set forth than in this book; whose authors fail to draw the conclusion that is likely to leap to the minds of moot readers.

Perhaps they fail to draw it because they are Hoosiers—born and raised in Indiana, both of them, in a period when a felicitous concurrence of natural conditions had made the Hoosiers a peculiar people. There was in the historic Hoosier character a dry skepticism, a refusal to be intimidated by stuffed-shirt respectability, which is admirably exemplified by Dr. Beard's study of the Coolidge era (indeed by his whole career); and there was also a congenital inability to Realize the Seriousness of the Situation. From time to time in this volume the Beards seem to have lived down that hereditary taint; but at the end they come out, if not knee deep in June, at any rate over their shoe tops.

American democracy is bending all its strength to the service of "humanistic purposes publicly declared and in process of realization, however tedious and painful the procedure." Its leaders are aware of the perils of interruption by force and cruelty and irrationality; but aware too that "Caesar's empire of blood, if it came, would perish." Well, of course it would perish; so will everything else, if you give it time enough. The consciousness that we are all equal in the sight of the Second Law of Thermodynamics is no great consolation to people who have children; what we would like to know is what is going to happen in the next few decades. The Beards know too much to guess at the answer, but they might have spared us this hint that God is keeping watch above His own. Maybe He is, but somebody else had better do something about it too.

And yet— The majority of the American people seems equally indifferent to the Seriousness of the Situation—perhaps because the foreign situation, immediately, is so much more serious than the domestic; perhaps because the situation does not look acutely serious so long as everybody goes on eating, however inadequately, at whatever cost to the future. It may be only another survival, in the reviewer, of that old Hoosier sentimentality which evokes the diffident suggestion that just possibly, just possibly, the situation is a little less serious because, and so long as, people do not realize its seriousness. This is to carry the doctrine of "American exceptionalism," invented by communists to explain Coolidge prosperity, farther than they ever carried it; to carry the possibilities of pragmatic dialectics farther than Marx ever carried them; it leads up into a rarefied realm of political thinking where the theorist has no rival but Mary Baker Eddy. Still, it is just possible that for social as for biological organisms, one of the most important factors in getting well is the belief that you are going to get well.

Or maybe it is all hooey, only a hangover of the world-is-full-of-roses-and-the-roses-full-of-dew ideology. Anyway, the Beards give you three dollars and a half's worth of facts, so you needn't worry about their conclusions.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW OF LITERATURE, published weekly by the Saturday Review Company, Inc., 25 West 45th Street, New York, N. Y. Joseph Hilton Smyth, President; Harrison Smith, Vice-President and Treasurer; Amy Loveman, Secretary. Subscription $3.50 a year; Canada $4. Vol. XX, No. 4, May 20, 1939. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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Lyrics and Issues

HUNTSMAN, WHAT QUARRY? By Edna St. Vincent Millay. New York: Harper & Bros. 1939. $2.

Reviewed by SELDEN RODMAN

POETS, like other artisans, must be judged by results; but intentions often provide a clue to their shortcomings. It was apparent long ago that Edna St. Vincent Millay, the gifted lyricist, had reached the limit of what she could say about herself in an intensely personal style. If, like Emily Dickinson, she had been able to lead a completely isolated life, it might have been a different story. But moving as she did from the inner to the outer world, she was forced to abandon the equilibrium between what she was saying and the brittle cadences in which she said it.

This was a great deal more obvious in her last book, "Conversation at Midnight," than in the present collection of lyrics, for here at least the poet has some of her old attitudes to rely on. In that unsuccessful Pink Party dialogue, she had, as Louis Untermeyer observed, sacrificed the engaging combination of a precocious child's voice and an experienced woman's disillusioned mind. And superficially, it might now appear that Miss Millay has returned to these. Certainly there is not a hint of the prosy, conversational lines and clever sophistry of that *tour de force* that tried to be story, play, and poem and was none of them. On the other hand there is a great deal of the old Millay. There is the compact, if not solid line; the tart transitions from wonder to *Weltschmerz;* the somewhat pretentious cosmic reflection of "Truce for a Moment"; the fine simplicity of the poem beginning "Branch by branch." She is still rearing towers to Beauty, still uneasily celebrating the "honesty" of her "anguish," the incandescence of her thought. And still, with the formal apology of the late romantic, assuring us that there has never been anything quite like her:

> Such as I am, however, I have brought
> To what it is, this tower; it is my own.
> Though it was reared To Beauty, it was wrought
> From what I had to build with: honest bone . . .

The old figures of speech ("Rolled in the trough of thick desire") have not been discarded; nor the sentimental ones ("The sun gone under and his beams laid by"); nor the archaic ones ("Between the awful spears of life and death/I run a grassy gauntlet in the sun"). Those who admired the Gothic charm of "Fatal Interview" will re-welcome the old tags: "In love's despite," "you needs must part," "anear." Even the death-defiant note of the rebellious undergraduate crops up now and again:

> Thou famished grave, I will not fill thee yet
> Roar though thou dost, I am too happy here . . .

But though few of the poems show any development from "The Buck in the Snow" or "Wine from These Grapes," the section devoted to comments on Spain and the three sonnets at the end of the book deserve special attention.

The war poems may be said to represent Miss Millay's effort to adapt her idiom to the issues she thinks she should be discussing. This is not to imply any

Nation-wide News Service
Edna St. Vincent Millay

hypocrisy or mere opportunism on her part. More than ten years ago she was moved to speak out against the framing of Sacco and Vanzetti. And if now she is preparing for the role of a poetic Dorothy Thompson to call another legion of democratic warriors to arms, the genuineness of her feeling of responsibility may be taken for granted. Unfortunately, the effect of this intellectual ambition upon her poems is bad. "The world is in an accident, has died/Perhaps already—ambulance! ding-ding!—" As in the effort to depict a communist in "Conversation at Midnight," she fails to identify herself with strange character or scene. The personality, if felt at all, is her own. We are not filled with the pity and horror of war because we are listening to Miss Millay's lament: what is conveyed is simply a new sense of the poet's frustration; anger that such an unlovely thing should intrude upon her world; spleen that the formula of "Love" will have to be replaced with "Logic"—or even "Hate."

A recent interview with Miss Millay in the *New York Post* throws some light upon the failure of these poems. "I used to make the fight of the pure pacifist," she tells us, "but that was when I thought the world was managed by human beings." Does this observation reveal a sentimentality verging on the anti-poetic? It comes dangerously close to it, for it suggests that Miss Millay never saw human beings—fallible people, some managers but more mismanagers of their lives; what she looked for was again the projected image of her ego, and when people in the real world patently failed to live up to her needs and moral perspective she could easily disown them. Art, as Auden says, is a product of history, not a cause; and the trend of Edna Millay's diction away from democratic public speech may be of more significance than her assertion "I would go to the front if I were a man."

An indication that Miss Millay is not entirely unaware of the dilemma and may yet purge her writing of these synthetic elements is contained in the three sonnets at the end of the book. There is a refreshing realism in them. They count unclean "these tears that turn no mill." They do not complain. One of them even suggests the heartening possibility that the poet will reinvigorate herself by examining the work of her younger contemporaries:

> I share your march, your hunger; all I lack
> Is the strong song I cannot sing, you can . . .

Two Poems of Unsolicited Advice

By HELEN SALZ

To a Precious Poet

STRIP not the burden
of living from life;
Beauty is guerdon
of suffering and strife.

Fated to perish
the tree without roots;
lost who would cherish
only the fruits.

He who enraptured
snares *Beauty alone*
finds he has captured
water or stone.

Moral Word to Utopians

Who tightly binds his feet together
with twisted rope,
in secret wings must certainly
have placed his hope.

Who throws his oars upon the stream
can hardly prove
accelerated speed
unless he move.

Anachronism is a fact
beside a name:
and being thriftily equipped
part of the game.

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Progress of an Innocent

THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH. By Waldo Frank. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1939. $2.75.

Reviewed by BEN RAY REDMAN

IN this book of more than six hundred closely printed pages, Waldo Frank traces the physical and spiritual pilgrimage of Mary Donald in search of salvation. It is a search that carries her from belief in the coming Christ to belief in the saving principle of love, love so comprehensive that it submerges the individual in the universal whole. It is a pilgrimage that carries her from the crude fanaticism of New England camp meetings to the no less unquestioning faith of the Communist Party, and one mystical step beyond—one step beyond, because the Party, to which she yearned to give her entire being, was content with less. It is a journey that leads her into strange byways and through trials that are not common, or not commonly recognized; and these trials result in actions that are alien to ordinary codes of conduct and not to be understood by conventionally insulated minds.

Superficially, her progress may be sketched as a series of escapes. From a household, overshadowed by a faith that is blind and cruel, she escapes to a small college where she falls under the influence of a radical instructor, Doris Granes. She follows Doris to New York and, while studying to be a teacher, lives with her and her husband; she experiences discontent and disillusionment, and leaves Doris for apparent freedom and work with the Parents' Aid Society. Other people's children not sufficing, she accepts marriage with a moderately wealthy young Jew, Willem Taess, because Willem needs her. But his need is not enough, and he is an inadequate lover. She quits Willem, seeking ground upon which she can stand surely—her own ground. By a gifted communist whom she has once met, she is led into the Party. For a moment which becomes months, still seeking truth, she backslides into an orgy of psychoanalysis, and then returns to her comrades, to move on to her final revelation.

Eric Schaal

Waldo Frank

The synopsis is simple, but the full-bodied novel which explores and exposes every turn of Mary's thought and action is far from that. Mary, indeed, is a character whose behavior is progressively surprising, puzzling, and incomprehensible, until we remember another character of fiction — Dostoievsky's Prince Mishkin, "The Idiot"—and take our cue from him. Mary's innocence is such that she is baffling to all who are less innocent. Her purity is an enigma to all who are less pure. She is one of those who know without learning. She sees without looking. She is a Mishkin, with a woman's body and a woman's needs. Waldo Frank may not have conceived her so; but how else shall we explain her actions with Luke Carns and the young man across the hall and the lad with the top, or even with Mr. Freddie Jourray? Her relationship with Carris, the psychoanalyst, lies outside her true pattern: there she is self-consciously, intellectually seeking, and Mary, sap and spirit, blood and bone, is non-intellectual.

Realism and a kind of mysticism lie down together in this novel, and the realism is of such quality that the materialistic reader wishes for nothing better, nothing else. It has been made possible by a remarkable knowledge of the minds and bodies of men and women, and by an extraordinarily sensitive awareness of the kinds and degrees and varieties of human relationships. The knowledge and the awareness are served by a candor as flawless as Mary's own. Perhaps this realism is at its best in the scenes involving Mary and Willem, in Mary's struggle with Querida, in all the action that takes place in the house of Taess; and in the story of Martha and Sid, one that might easily have been commonplace, but that is passionately charged with a life deep-flowing, bitter, and memorable. It is seen in scores of portraits drawn in passing, and in many minor incidents. But intermittently, and with increasing frequency, acute observation and sound psychology yield place to mystical yearnings and vague raptures; the sure writing grows turgid with the swelling and involvement of the thought. The balance of thought and language becomes dubious. The reader is not sure whether the thought sometimes eludes him because it is too full for words, or because it is a growth too frail for the grand language that enfolds it. He is not sure that Mr. Frank's union of realism and mysticism is successful.

Most books may be easily dismissed as negligible or competent, or hailed with equal facility as splendid jobs. "The Bridegroom Cometh" belongs in neither of these categories. It is not, I surmise, a book to be judged in a day or a month. Whatever its true stature, it has been greatly planned, and, whatever its true worth, it is vastly interesting.

Pinchot

William Sloane

Chills from Elsewhere

THE EDGE OF RUNNING WATER. By William Sloane. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1939. $2.50.

Reviewed by N. L. ROTHMAN

MR. SLOANE gave us a story about two years ago, called "To Walk the Night." It was a remarkable compound of horror and simplicity, suspense and fourth-dimensional speculation, one of those literary naturals that we savor almost regretfully, feeling that it can scarcely be duplicated. But here is "The Edge of Running Water," a story just as good, which is meant to be high praise. Better than duplication, it is made up of new matters entirely, suspenses for which we have not, until the very end, any possible clue, and reaches of speculation even beyond those of "To Walk the Night." Mr. Sloane writes of things which must not, in a review, be defined. Perhaps one sentence on page four, in which the narrator says, "It rips the fabric of human existence from throat to hem and leaves us naked to a wind as cold as the space between the stars," will give some intimation of what is to be met with.

Certainly the mysteries with which, in this book, we finally come face to face, make the usual run of mystery and horror stories seem very comfortable and familiar. Perhaps the strongest achievement of Mr. Sloane is the way in which he brings to bear all the findings of modern psychology and physics, assembles their powers, and then steps forward into the unknown areas they have not charted and will not acknowledge. And yet it is done quite simply, in a Maine farmhouse, with a set of real, solid characters and a straight line of action that moves like an arrow, to the climax that is a shock despite everything we have tried to guess at. There is nothing else to say now, except "read it and see." Also this, that Mr. Sloane has demonstrated he can do it again; we anticipate a small shelf of this special kind of tale.

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Three Political Giants

AMERICA'S SILVER AGE. The Statecraft of Clay-Webster-Calhoun. By Gerald W. Johnson. New York: Harper & Bros. 1939. $3.50.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

AS John Quincy Adams concluded his unhappy term as President, four men stepped forward on the political stage in the roles in which the country was thereafter to know them. Each had played a confused part in the past, but each was to hold to a fairly consistent path in the future. They were to dominate the great middle period of American history, up to the years when the storm of Civil War was about to break; the period that Mr. Johnson calls our Silver Age. Each of the four had reason to be consistent, for he represented not only a few distinct ideas or policies, but a distinct set of interests. Daniel Webster personified the Eastern section of what soon became the Whig Party, a section of fast-growing industrial, commercial, and banking groups. Henry Clay represented the Western section of the same party, with landowning and agricultural elements eager for better markets and hence for internal improvements at the cost of the Federal Treasury. Calhoun embodied the wishes and fears of the old-settled parts of the deep South. The most fortunate of them all, Andrew Jackson, was representative of a rising democracy that possessed no sectional characteristics whatever; that appealed to New York laborers as to Western frontiersmen, to George Bancroft and William Cullen Bryant as to coonskin-capped politicians. He alone had the central thrust of the national march behind him.

The other three were at the mercy of conflicting forces, of eddies and countercurrents that gave each of them a turbulent, mixed, and in the end frustrated career. One had the most disciplined and logical intellect of the time, one the most eloquent voice, one the most captivating personality. Each longed intensely for a clear field, a position of dominance like Jackson's, and each was frustrated by the others. Webster prevented Clay from getting the Presidential nomination when in 1840 it was tantamount to election, and Clay later took his revenge; both stood constantly in Calhoun's path. The story of these three careers is a fascinating personal drama, and it is the key to a titanic conflict of sections, economic groups, and political dogmas.

Mr. Johnson has cast his interpretation of the men and the epoch into a long, closely-reasoned, incisively-written historical essay that can be read in three hours and that is so compact with thought and racy in style that few will wish to lay it down until they have finished it. It is not a story but a commentary; yet all the clash and suspense are still there, and not a few of the dramatic events are pointed with new meanings. The book, to be sure, has serious faults. It is defaced by a number of historical blunders that would be more censurable if they were not so gross and palpable that they will mislead nobody; blunders like the statement that Arkansas was admitted to the Union before Missouri. At various points it lacks acquaintance with the most recent scholarship. Some of its generalizations have a rashly cocksure ring, and one of Mr. Johnson's main theses seems to this reviewer profoundly mistaken. This is his assertion, made not once but repeatedly, that the statesmen of the period 1820-50 mastered a set of problems quite apart from slavery (which they did not master at all) which make the problems of today look like simplicity itself. The truth is that problems of national growth were not appallingly difficult while there was ample room to grow in, and the problems of governmental adjustment to industrialization, immigration, and urbanization were not dismaying in a period when the government was almost universally expected to practise a laissez faire abstention from meddling. But neither the clear faults nor the questionable assertions of Mr. Johnson's book are important compared with its merits. Even when its reasoning is dubious it is provocative, and again and again it strikes a nail on the head with clinching force.

Compressing into 275 pages his analysis of the three statesmen and their battles, from the Peace of Ghent to the Great Compromise, Mr. Johnson holds the scales fairly even between section and section, man and man, idea and idea. It seems plain that, like most people at that time and most readers of history since, he likes Clay better than his two associates and antagonists; but he is not the less emphatic in demonstrating how often and inexcusably Clay was mistaken, how numerous were his weaknesses and faults. He likes Clay as a conciliator—one of his best chapters is "On the Evil Fame of Peace-Loving Statesmen," in which he points out that our great "pacific" democracy somehow admires most easily the Washingtons and Jacksons who have been heroes in war. He likes him also because, unlike most other leaders —above all unlike the castiron Calhoun —he never held the conviction that he saw and expounded one hundred per cent of the truth; he always admitted that he might be totally in error. He likes him because he was so ugly, so human, so persuasive. The author seems inclined at times to treat Webster harshly, perhaps because Webster's sectional and economic interests so signally and maleficently triumphed a little later over Clay's and Calhoun's, perhaps because the orator seems a bit empty to our later generation. Mr. Johnson is at his best in his portraiture of Calhoun, whose mind and personality became so simple as they ossified, but who has nevertheless baffled a good many students. There is significant truth in the author's statement that while Calhoun could foresee the future with remarkable prescience, he could not understand the present. He foresaw, at certain moments, the ruin of the South, but he never saw that he was making a fatal contribution to its doom.

This is a controversial book upon a controversial period. There is much in it to inspire dissent as well as assent. But it gets beneath the surface of events. It is full of ideas. It is alive and interesting. It is written with force and pungency. And it contains some lessons of current value to our democracy; not the least being the importance of that moderation which Clay always and Calhoun never practised, the value of that idea of compromise which Burke had preached, which Clay almost always exemplified, and in defense of which Webster delivered the 7th of March speech which his own New England contemporaries thought his final disgrace, but which a later generation has pronounced his greatest glory.

Birthplace of Henry Clay. (From "America's Silver Age.")

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The Saturday Review
of Literature

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THE SATURDAY REVIEW is indexed in the "Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature."

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Internationalism of the P.E.N.

THE radio voice is now the most influential pressure upon mass opinion, but the writer still best expresses what the world is thinking. In the week of May 8th, more than a hundred writers from Europe and North and South America gathered in New York under the auspices of the International P.E.N. Clubs, and by invitation of the New York World's Fair discussed for three days the vital topic of basic freedoms. What concerned them was the war of ideas behind the present crisis.

Correspondents, such as Vincent Sheean, Sir Willmott Lewis, and Dorothy Thompson dealt with the writing of contemporary history. Novelists, among them Jules Romains, Pearl Buck, Thomas Mann, André Maurois, Arnold Zweig, Sholem Asch, had their say upon the effect of exile upon culture, and the responsibility of the creative writer for the world as it is today and may be tomorrow. Critics and editors—Mary Colum, Bernard DeVoto, Ralph Bates, Max Ascoli, Walter F. White, and others—spoke passionately, on another day, upon whether the duty of the writer is to keep literature from degenerating into propaganda, even though he has to take his part in the contemporary conflicts or lose his grip upon actual life. They all of them seemed to accept a phrase of Jules Romains's as a keynote for the discussions. The problem of the writer, today, is the problem of man—by which he meant civilized man.

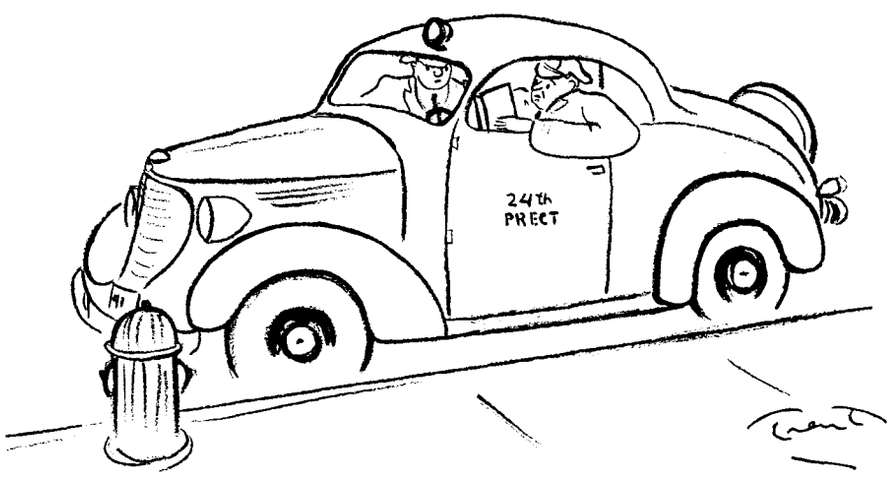
And through all these papers, most of them evidently the product of careful thought, and many of them delivered with impressive emotion and earnestness, a remarkable unanimity of basic opinion ran. The arguing and the divergences in tactics were upon secondary questions. These writers believed that, in a changing world, literature must keep true to its traditional function as an instrument of civilization, and must stay valid for contemporary man. As to the only way in which this could be accomplished, they were in extraordinary agreement.

Rumanians, Latvians, Swedes, and Norwegians; German, Italian, and Austrian exiles; French, Dutch, English, North Americans, and Latin Americans—there was an obvious opportunity here for such an uprising of nationalisms as has been seen more than once at earlier Congresses of the P.E.N. Clubs. But nationalism, supposedly the dominant force in the world today, scarcely raised its head. To those who listened, the fact seemed deeply significant. Political internationalism is, for the moment, dead, and we seem to be back in the crude and dangerous statecraft of power by which our nations were made. Economic internationalism is a battered craft of which it is hard to say whether it is an old model about to sink, or a patched-up experiment not yet strong enough to keep out the waves. But the internationalism of thought and imagination is clearly not dead; seems, indeed, to be growing stronger, not weaker. It is still possible for creative writers from thirty to forty nations to agree upon indispensables.

And this agreement, as it was stated by such different writers of diverse races as Lin Yutang of China, J. B. Priestley of England, Jorge Manach of Cuba, G. A. Borgese from Italy, Ernst Toller from Germany, Ferdinand Bruckner from Austria, and others named above, is not difficult to put into a general formula, although the acute and experienced minds of the writers added subtleties and discriminations which made what was common in their beliefs much more than a formula. They felt, these contemporary writers who have earned the confidence of their readers, that all sincere and creative writing is a by-product of freedom for thought and respect for the human personality. They did not say, and probably no one of them believed, that it is dependent upon democracy, or indeed upon any one method of governing a state where the intellectual and moral welfare of the citizen was a vital consideration. They did not make the mistake of too many patriots who insist that only in the American way, or the English way, or the Scandinavian way, can the creative mind continue to function. That, of course, is nonsense. There have been art and literature, and great science too, in the past, under absolute monarchies and dictatorships. What they all felt was, that the problem of the writer is the problem of civilized man. That modern man can not stay civilized in any regime where violence has been adopted as a permanent policy, and persuasion debased into trickery. That modern man can not stay civilized if the power of the state is to be regarded as a more important end than the happiness of the individual. That when the human rights and dignities of one race or faith within the community are ruthlessly destroyed, the human rights and dignities of all are threatened.

And what they felt was also that the writer, who is only a sensitive and articulate representative of his country, could not function long in a nation which denied individualism. His business is primarily with man. He must write about man as he is and as he wants to be, not about man as cannon fodder or as a creature shaped by propaganda or a unit in power politics. He has to protest against such ideas because, when successful, they mean inevitably his own destruction. Herr Mann disappears; Herr Goebbels takes his place. If there is no freedom of the mind, literature and the arts must sooner or later be stifled. Creative writing is a better index of the state of civilization than the stock market, or military power, or the efficiency of government, because creative writing records, accurately and prophetically, the possibility of what the ages, as well as these writers, have agreed to call a good life.

All of these things have been said before, although some of them never better. What was noteworthy in this world Congress of Writers was that men and women who have often attacked each other in print and who have seemed to differ in their idealisms and their prejudices more than to agree in their basic ideas, came into such unexpected and certainly unplanned-for harmony. It would have been possible to exchange manu-



"Into the rising sun they walked hand-in-hand, unafraid of what the future held."

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scripts; M. Romains could have delivered Dorothy Thompson's address; Arnold Zweig and Pedro Salinas and G. A. Borgese showed their racial temperaments much less than their common discovery that at this moment, and for the writer, only freedom of conscience and independence of thought really mattered. If they had all been told to write this way, they could not have been much more in agreement. But they were not told.

It is quite possible that this new internationalism of thinking, open and vigorous in the large part of the world which this Congress represented, is going to prove of great importance when power politics has demonstrated its inability to meet the demands of the unquenchable human spirit. It is very possible, also, that this internationalism extends into the other part of the world where the free mind has been suppressed; for creative writers, as these speakers prove, are pretty much the same everywhere. You can make conscienceless propagandists of some of them, and you can shut the mouths of most, but necessity sooner or later finds its way. And a reasonable freedom for thought and imagination is the writer's necessity.

H. S. C.

Mr. Moser's Proposal

A BILL, introduced into Congress last week by Representative Moser of Pennsylvania, proposes that any person who wishes to reprint, perform, or sell a copyrighted work, "and is unable to secure an agreement with the copyright owner . . . may file an application in writing with the Federal Communications Commission for a permit to make such desired use of the copyrighted work at such rates of royalties or charges therefor as the Commission shall determine. . . ." Although the bill goes on to say that "the Commission shall not grant any application unless it finds that such action will be in the public interest," we cannot see what public interest can be served by the proposal. The bill, if enacted, would be an opening wedge to destroy the effectiveness of all our hard-won copyright legislation. It could obviously be taken advantage of. What would Congress say of a proposal to give authority to a government agency to determine prices at which motor cars, shoes, or houses must be sold? We can well imagine that Mr. Moser's proposal might work to the advantage of piratically inclined motion picture producers, radio stations, and publishers; it is not in the interest of legitimate publishers, authors, or the fair-minded public, which recognizes the author's right to a reasonable return on his work. The bill is now in committee; if it comes out with any signs of life, we shall return to the subject at greater length. But we hope that it will die a speedy and inconspicuous death.

Letters to the Editor

White, Thurber, Nash

SIR:—

Thurber and White and Ogden Nash—
On the world's pocked face with its strawberry rash,
They stand, three birthmarks, small but clear,
Indelible proofs of Experienced Fear
(Fear that we'll take the wrong things seriously,
Fear that we'll laugh at others deliriously).

Ogden Nash and Thurber and White—
Lit cigarettes in the dark of night,
Not large enough to Show a Way,
Not glaring like the noon of day
(Their glow makes patterns from gestures' curves,
They satisfy and they steady the nerves).

Nash and White and Thurber, Jim—
Not pæans of praise like Pippa's hymn
Nor calls to arms or chants of hate,
Or ribald songs when the hour is late,
Or lullabies or the cymbals crash
Or—take it, Thurber and White and Nash.

I read the April 29 issue a week late, but I think that seven days ago Leonard Bacon's article would have had the same effect of making me want to stand up and join in the cheering—not that I have a good cheering voice.

BERYL WILLIAMS.

New York City.

"The Grapes of Wrath"

SIR:—I've just read Mr. Canby's "Two Letters" in the April 29 *Saturday Review*. On Tuesday afternoon and evening I read "The Grapes of Wrath"; I can't forbear to comment.

"The Grapes of Wrath" is a superb piece of reporting. The vocabulary of the Joads does not contain one phrase that I have not heard *often* among the tenants and hired hands with whom I occasionally picked cotton on my father's Texas farms. They didn't *all* talk about sex, but many of them did, and those who did, talked as the Joads talk. The descriptions of the dusty roads, the worn-out farms, the burning sun, the men squatting in the dust and scratching little pictures, the miserable little houses in which they live, and all the rest, are astoundingly good. But those are the obvious things to anyone who grew up in the Southwest in small towns in an agricultural district.

There are probably some who think that Steinbeck's novel is obviously dated. I'm not so sure. Through the town in which I lived ran a main highway from the rather rainy counties of East Texas to the dry counties of West Texas. Thirty years ago the tenant farmers in covered wagons were making similar journeys—going west in rainy years to take up cheap land, going back east when the droughts came. Again and again I saw them come and go; on the seat in the front of the wagon rode the man and his wife, and from under the tarpaulins peered out the tousled heads of half a dozen children who were crowded in with a few chairs and a stove. On the back hung the wash pot and tubs and under the wagon trotted two or three lean, spotted hounds. For "jaloppies" read "covered wagons" and the story is the same.

I liked what Mr. Canby had to say about Falstaff's language, partly, I'm sure, because I had been thinking of it myself while reading "The Grapes of Wrath." I particularly liked it because it suggests a point which other reviewers seem to have entirely overlooked. For the Joads, references to sex experiences are a form of wit. The talk, no less than the experiences themselves, enlivens lives in which there is little else to joke about. Steinbeck shows a fine understanding of his people in gradually subordinating the talk about sex as the Joads go into a new country; the very young and vigorous Al is the only one who can drive a truck all day and "go tom-cattin' around" at night.

No reviewer has, I think, sufficiently emphasized Steinbeck's knowledge of the forces which hold a family together and the forces which cause it to disintegrate. He understands that family councils are an important part of the lives of the Joads. The scene in which the men squat around the truck and the women stand just behind is particularly good. Plenty of novelists have shown such scenes in the parlors and sitting rooms of old-established middle class families, but few, if any, have realized the struggle which a Ma Joad may make to hold her family together and make them work for the good of the clan.

J. HOMER CASKEY.

Ohio University,
Athens, Ohio.

An Edith Wharton Collection

SIR:—A collection of the manuscripts and papers of the late Edith Wharton, including many letters from various correspondents, has recently been presented to the Yale Collection of American Literature in the Yale University Library by her literary executor, Mr. Gaillard Lapsley. The letters are not open to inspection until 1968.

It would, of course, add greatly to the interest and value of the collection if those people fortunate enough to possess letters from her would present them to the Yale University Librarian to be deposited with Mrs. Wharton's own collection of manuscripts and letters. It has been suggested that a number of people who would not wish to dispose of their letters by sale might be glad to give or bequeath them for the enrichment of the Yale collection with the knowledge that they would thus be carefully preserved, and, after an interval of thirty years, made available for scholars and others interested. It goes without saying that the Yale University Library would welcome such gifts.

BERNHARD KNOLLENBERG,
Librarian.

Yale University Library,
New Haven, Conn.

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Words and Music

BY STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

AS ALL composers know, a librettist is the man whose words get in the way of the music. But, all the same, it is a curious and fascinating business, trying to write words that must be sung instead of read or spoken, and trying to devise some sort of story that can be developed musically as well as in speech. You may write what seems to you a very pleasant line and discover, to your horror, that it is almost completely unsingable. Or you may barely sketch a mood that the music completely fulfills. But, in any case, it is work in a new medium, not quite like anything else.

In "The Devil and Daniel Webster," composer and librettist, at least, were united upon one thing. We wanted to do a one-act folk-opera, American in theme and unpretentious in structure, that could use verse when it liked and prose when it liked and go from one to the other without strain or apology. How far we have been able to succeed in that particular job, no one knows less than ourselves. But it has been an interesting job to try, and not without its moments of merriment.

"The Devil and Daniel Webster," in its original form as a short story, concerned a New Hampshire farmer, Jabez Stone, who got so tired of his hard luck that he swore he'd sell his soul to the Devil to change it. The Devil—a highly New England devil—immediately took him up on his bargain and Jabez shortly became the richest and most prominent man in the community. But, when the time came for the Devil to claim his part of the bargain, Jabez Stone, in his terror, appealed to Daniel Webster, the great neighbor, to get him out of his difficulties. It was a long way from New Hampshire to Marshfield, Massachusetts, but Webster agreed to take the case. But, when Webster started to argue, the Devil held firmly to the letter of his contract—he had bought Jabez Stone and insisted on delivery of the property. Webster called for a judge and jury—the Devil called up a jury of famous American traitors and renegades from Teach, the pirate, to Smeet the strangler, and summoned Justice Hathorne, who presided over the Salem witch trials, to judge the case. From the start, everything went wrong with Webster's cause, till, at last, realizing his own danger as well as Jabez Stone's, he appealed to the ghostly jury, not as demons but as men.

When I first wrote "The Devil and Daniel Webster" as a short story, I didn't see it as anything but that. It began as a title on a sheet of yellow paper, "The Devil at Sailor's Corners," but there wasn't anything for the devil to do. Then Van Wyck Brooks's "Flowering of New England" gave me the clue to Webster, and, after some amount of digging in libraries, the plot fell into shape. But the story was a short story, as far as I knew, and, in spite of two amateur dramatizations, it kept on being a short story in my mind.

Then, about a year ago, Douglas Moore, the composer, came to me with an idea. We had already done an operetta for school use called "The Headless Horseman" and the experience had been an entertaining one. And we were both interested in the same kind of American folk-material. Well, why not try and do something about it—something without the pretensions of grand opera but something which, if we were lucky, could use American speech and American folk-music and do it with sincerity?

Vandamm

George Rasely (the Devil), Nancy McCord, and Lansing Hatfield (Daniel Webster) in a scene from the opera.

So, finally, after a good deal of discussion, we decided that "The Devil and Daniel Webster" might serve as a basis. Mr. Moore then went to the country and left me looking at the short story. I may say that, so far, our collaborations have followed a perfectly distinct and recognizable curve. Mr. Moore asks me if I wouldn't be interested in such and such an idea. I tell him I wouldn't. I then suggest another idea. He tells me it is a very nice idea but musically quite impossible. We finally settle upon a third one, I then write the book and lyrics and show them to him. He compliments them highly and says they will be extremely difficult to set. He then goes ahead and sets them. At some point during the composition of the music, he asks me to change something. I tell him I won't, and do. And, after it's all over, we have a drink.

It was so with "The Devil and Daniel Webster." But, when I looked over the story, I found that I had taken on more than I'd bargained for. The plot covered a good many years—they had to be compressed to hours. The hero, Jabez Stone, was a middle-aged farmer. And there wasn't the slightest suggestion of a woman's part except in a few casual references to the fact that Jabez Stone had a wife.

However, there is just one advantage in adapting your own work. The original author can neither complain nor sue. I wiped out Jabez Stone's entire brood of children and began the opera with his wedding. This gave a chance, both to introduce a heroine and to bring on a chorus of neighbors who could play their part in the scene. As for the Devil—well, he would, naturally, come to the wedding too, an unexpected and horrifying guest. He would come with his collecting-box under his arm and somebody—yes, the village fiddler—would tamper with the box. In the story, the box had contained the soul of Miser Stevens. Well, we could still use that. A white moth could fly out of the box, to the consternation of principals and chorus. Chance for something there — "He's sold his soul to the devil"—that sort of thing. And after that, the plot could proceed on much the same lines as the story.

Only it couldn't—that was the difficulty. For, in the story, I had carefully avoided writing Webster's speech to the jury of the damned who tried the case of the Devil versus Jabez Stone. I had done so deliberately and even, it seemed to me, with some ingenuity. But I couldn't possibly avoid it, in a trial-scene to be played on the stage. There would have to be words for an actor to say or sing.

Remained one further problem—and a major one. We wanted to keep away from the hifalutin as much as possible and use a good deal of casual, everyday speech. We didn't want the heroine singing lyrically "Won't you sit down?" or the hero chanting "I spent five dollars last Tuesday" as if it were "Ave, Maria." So we tried, without set numbers, to work out a scheme of things whereby music and verse would be employed in moments of heightened emotion, but a great deal of the plot would be carried in prose. Webster's speech to the jury, for instance, is spoken against music, not delivered as an aria. We employ a good deal of chorus, both in the opening and the finale, but the chorus has a reason for its existence and we have tried not to have them just a group of merrymakers, clinking pasteboard glasses and singing the praises of Old Heidelberg. In other words, while recognizing the limits of a tradition, we have tried to make certain experiments within those limits. For it is only by ex-

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perimentation that a new thing can grow.

For the librettist, too, there is something very fascinating in watching what music can do to words—to heighten or soften them, to amplify or develop them, sometimes in ways that one has not expected at all. When you write a line of verse, it has its own music to you. But a composer may find a very different sort of music in it, and that is exciting. And then, sometimes, you both seem to have found the same music. It is a process of give and take. And from it, finally, something emerges, something a little different from what either party visualized at first, but with a possible life of its own.

A possible life—that is all one can say till the curtain rings up. But it has been something to try.

British State of Mind

PASSPORT FOR A GIRL. By Mary Borden. New York: Harper & Bros. 1939. $2.50.

Reviewed by GEORGE STEVENS

MARY BORDEN'S new novel is about as convincing an explanation as we are likely to get of a certain state of mind among the British upper classes from the seizure of Austria to the Munich conference. She has produced a withering analysis of the mixture of ostrichism, snobbery, sneaking anti-Semitism, procrastination, and fatty degeneration of the sympathies that contributed to the acceptance of Munich.

The girl who needs the passport is April Goodchild, who helps her half-Jewish fiancé to escape from Austria. Her father, Hilary Goodchild, is in the foreign office, one of the few who see Hitler for what he really is; but he has the self-conscious ineffectuality of a Galsworthy character. Her mother, Cynthia, is a socially successful ostrich who takes up with a Nazi. April's passionate humanitarianism upsets the household, which is willing to sympathize with her young man, Hans Hartmann, only at a distance.

The story shifts between dinner parties in London, with everyone pooh-poohing the Nazi menace, and scenes of torture and despair in Vienna. The London scenes are first rate, both as narrative and as explanation of events. The Vienna scenes have been handled more effectively by many foreign correspondents. "Passport for a Girl" would have been more pointed if it had omitted unnecessary recapitulations of history, and reduced the Austrian material to a few essential episodes. Also, it suffers a little from a technical slickness which occasionally obscures the human values. But the book is very much worth reading from any point of view. Nothing else has so savagely stripped the padding from those in England who thought—until recently—that Hitler was protecting them from the Bolsheviks.

The Virginian

CARTER GLASS: A biography. By Rixey Smith and Norman Beasley. With an introduction by Senator Harry Flood Byrd and a preface by Douglas Southall Freeman. New York: Longmans, Green & Company. 1939. $3.

Reviewed by VIRGINIUS DABNEY

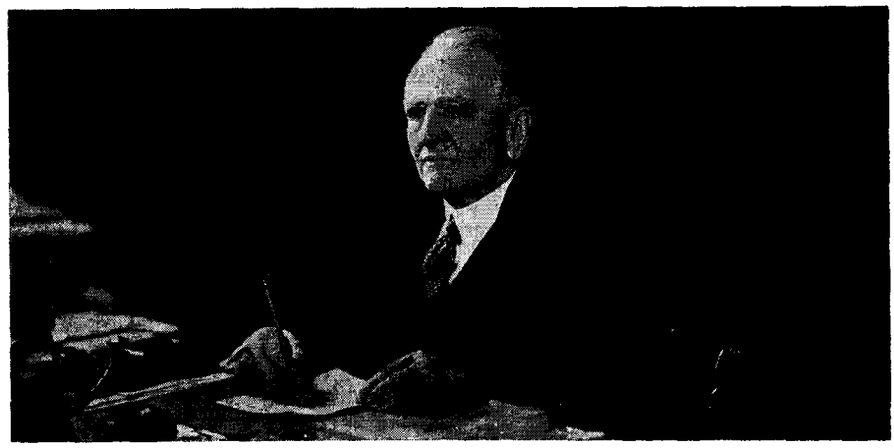
I GREATLY like and admire Senator Glass, although I happen to disagree with him on many current issues, but I presume to doubt if he or anyone else is so complete a paragon as this volume would have us believe. In these 426 pages there is not so much as a hint that the senior Senator from Virginia has a single fault. The nearest approach to such an admission is to be found in the closing pages, in a quotation from Mr. Frank Kent, which is predominantly complimentary, but which calls the Senator "the most testy, irascible, outspoken, short-tempered and sharp-tongued little individual who ever held public office in our country." However, the validity of this judgment has been discounted well in advance by the authors, who have examined such dicta midway in the volume, and have pronounced them mere "gossip-born legend."

There are, of course, many things to be said for Senator Glass. Messrs. Smith and Beasley say some of them well, and with appropriate restraint. The leading part which the Virginian played in establishing the Federal Reserve System, his able service as Secretary of the Treasury under Wilson, and his independent refusal over a long period to truckle to public opinion, are all cogently set down.

There emerges from these pages the picture of a brave, resourceful, outspoken and forthright public servant, opposed to practically everything President Roosevelt has done since he took office in 1933, and having no hesitation in saying so. No reference is made to the frequently quoted, and apparently authentic, declaration of the Senator that the New Deal is a "national disgrace," but the fact that Mr. Glass is more completely out of sympathy with the Rooseveltian policies than almost anyone in our public life, is made abundantly clear. The lighter touches also are here—such as the Senator's passionate devotion to the Philadelphia Athletics and their renowned impresario, Mr. Cornelius McGillicuddy, together with his long-time predilection for that sulphurous expletive, "Dad bum it!"

While exaggerations are not numerous in these pages, the authors, at times, accord Senator Glass a more resounding accolade than he deserves—as, for example, in their discussion of his unsuccessful campaign for the Senate in 1911 against Claude A. Swanson, the "machine" candidate. Swanson won handily, and while Glass undoubtedly made telling points against him on his stumping tour, it would be preposterous to say that Glass smashed the political mechanism which gave Swanson more than two votes to his one. Yet we are informed by Messrs. Smith and Beasley that, thanks to Glass, "since 1911, there has been no effective political machine in Virginia"! The truth is, it has been so "effective" for the past twenty-eight years as to be unbeatable, except at extremely rare intervals.

And why does this book omit all mention of the fact that the youthful Glass, as a member of the Resolutions Committee, placed his imprimatur formally upon the free silver aberration at the Democratic National Convention of 1896? We are made vaguely aware that this Virginia delegate was temporarily swept away in the tide of enthusiasm which surged about William Jennings Bryan, following the "cross of gold" speech, but that is all. A lot of other good men fell for "16 to 1," Bryan's brummagem panacea for the world's ills, so it is not discreditable, but merely interesting, that Glass, who subsequently became such an uncompromising advocate of the gold standard, likewise succumbed. At the same time, the fact should have been chronicled here, and its implications explored.



Senator Carter Glass

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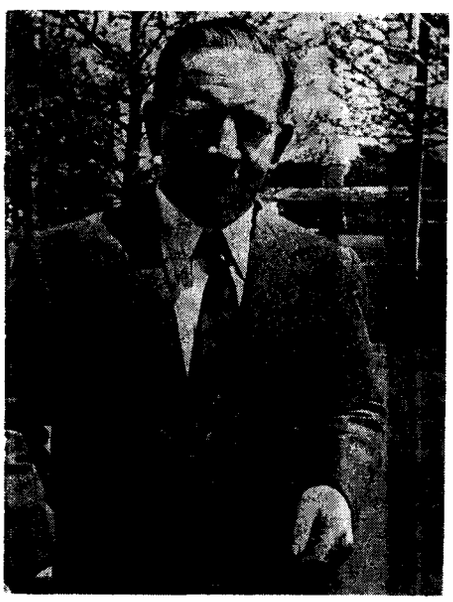
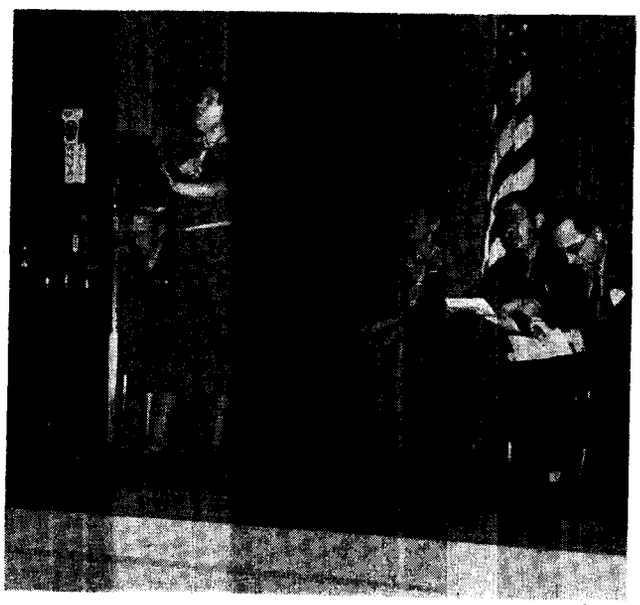
Last week at the World's Fair P.E.N. delegates from some thirty nations met to discuss letters and the state of the world. Above, Jules Romains (right), international P.E.N. president and author of "Men of Good Will," lunches with Hermon Ould of England, international secretary. . . . Dorothy Thompson (right), president of the New York center, delivers the address on "Writing Contemporary History" which is printed on page 13. Other news of the P.E.N. Congress (P for poets and playwrights; E for editors and essayists; N for novelists) appears on page 8 of this issue.





Ralph Bates (above), author of "Sirocco," spoke on "Ivory Tower or Soap Box?" . . . So did Mary M. Colum (above, right), author of "From These Roots." On platform with Mrs. Colum are Erika Mann, Bernard DeVoto, and Max Ascoli. . . . Below, Lin Yutang and Nora Waln.

The P.E.N. Congress

Photographs by Robert Disraeli

André Maurois and Thomas Mann (above) listen to speakers. . . . Inset, Johan Bojer, from Norway. . . . Below, the P.E.N. Congress between sessions; Hendrik Van Loon in right center background.

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Writing Contemporary History

BY DOROTHY THOMPSON

I SUPPOSE that every age has its representative form of letters. The poetic drama was perhaps the most characteristic expression of the Renaissance; the essay and the comedy of manners of the eighteenth century; the novel of the nineteenth and early twentieth; but I sometimes wonder whether journalism is not the most representative use of words of these times in which we live. Certainly it has attracted to itself novelists and even poets—I am sure in our own country that Mr. John Gunther and Vincent Sheean, and even myself, might in a different age have chosen a quite different form of literary activity.

Journalism overshadows even our novelists. They tend to become reporters, illuminating their reporting, to be sure, by poetic insight. Thus the novels of Mr. Saroyan or Mr. Steinbeck are, in a way, largely rapportage. And conversely, the journalist is forced, if his writing is to get anywhere near the truth, to look below the surface of events to the forces underlying them; to analyze the characters who set them in motion; and so his work is bound to leave the field of pure reporting and become, to a certain extent, a work of imagination.

The handicaps of the journalist attempting to record the events of his times were never more numerous. One of the difficulties is the formal difficulty of getting access to information, in a world where so much censorship exists and where he is constantly put in the way of information planted for one diplomatic purpose or another. We therefore have the paradox that although the means for distributing the information about the world in which we live were never so technically perfected, there has never been a time in our lifetime, apart from the years of the war, in which the journalist was more dependent on rumor.

During the Austrian crisis, the Munich Conference, and the two Czecho-Slovak crises, there was a coverage of the events in the American newspapers that was really unprecedented. Tens of thousands of words were written by very able and competent men. And yet we still do not know the truth about that whole period; I mean that there are facts, diplomatic conversations, reports between governments, which must have had much to do with determining actions, and which we do not know about.

For instance, we do not really know what happened to Lord Runciman—what happened inside Lord Runciman's mind—in the weeks that he was in Prague, or exactly why his report should start one way and end another. At this moment not one of us—even those whose business has been to follow foreign affairs most closely—really knows what is happening in Russia. Our reporting and interpretation of events there is elaborate guesswork. Walter Duranty remarked the other day, apropos the formal ending of the censorship of news in Russia: "Now it may be told. The only trouble is that we don't know what to tell."

Despite the fact that some of the most prescient journalists have been in Russia, no adequate explanation of the Russian purges has ever been made. What we *do not* know in all countries is much greater than what we *do* know.

The reporter used to think that all he needed to do was objectively report events, in order to present a fair picture of what is going on in the world. But that is obviously no longer in the least adequate, because the events themselves may be staged, and represent quite the opposite of what they seem to represent. This week, for example, an editorial in the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* attracted world-wide notice. It was first picked up in this country in the *Staats Zeitung*, later in the Baltimore *Sun*, and finally got around to appearing in the *Times*. The gist of this article was that with the retiring of Litvinov, the ideological warfare between Russia and Germany might come to an end and both countries return to a policy of realism.

The journalist has to ask himself whether that article is not deliberately planted for the purpose of scaring Japan; whether the Russians did not remain quiet on it for the purpose of bringing pressure to bear on England; or whether, even, it might not be doing that most disconcerting of all things—meaning just what it said.

The journalist has to contend today with the most subtle forms of pressure, as well as with very crude forms. In all countries his access to the facts depends upon personal connections, and back of each of them is usually somebody trying to use him. He really lives a large part of his time in the middle of a detective story. Who, for instance, is this Mr. Krivitsky, who affirms that he was head of the western European intelligence division of the Red Army and proceeds to tell millions of readers of *The Saturday Evening Post* the inside story of the relations between the Gestapo and the OGPU? The fact that his name is not Krivitsky is of no importance. But his facts are neither provable nor unprovable. One can only measure them with other facts, most of which are also not provable or unprovable, and see whether they seem to make sense.

Even working inside the United States, we are dealing with factors that are relatively new in our country. One of these is the government public relations counsel, the government press agent, who supplies journalists with information which may be factually correct, but whose object is to create the most favorable possible impression. It is astonishing, but this is a quite new institution in American democratic government.

We inherited it from the war, when for the first time we realized that propaganda is part of the national defense, and we employed people to "sell" the war to the American public. They "sold" it according to the well established techniques worked out by high pressure salesmen for industrial products who, long before governments thought of it, had employed psychologists to advise them on how to influence the public mind and create a mass demand for something.

One of the greatest difficulties which the journalist, anxious to present a true picture, has to deal with in this world, is that parties and governments have taken over this technique of exploiting basic human emotions in a propaganda for personalities, leadership, and ideas.

To take some illustrations: the journalist anxious to analyze exactly what the logical results of the Munich conference were likely to be had to contend with a public mind which was absolutely doped with the idea that Munich meant peace. "Munich Means Peace" was a slogan which had been carefully invested with the aura of cheering crowds, Mrs. Chamberlain praying, a grateful French public offering Mr. Chamberlain a peace villa; and the result of it all was that any journalist who said, "Let us analyze the probable results of this move, in the light of previous experiences in dealing with this particular government—the Nazis" and came to the conclusion that it was not peace, had to be prepared to be denounced as a war monger.

The propaganda campaign of the German government to prove that collective security means aggression has been enormously successful in this country, in promoting the campaign for American isolation. It seems logically so absurd that you would think that no one would fall for it. But I call your attention to the fact that the organized fruit growers of this country have long ago convinced most Americans that if they did not give their children a glass of orange juice a day the children would all perish early in life of inadequate vitamins, although if that had been true, none of us of middle age would be alive; and the tooth paste manufacturers have made practically every American fear that he is likely to get pyorrhea, although this is actually a relatively rare disease of the gums and in no case to be cured or prevented by tooth paste.

But the journalist, moving through a maze of government propaganda, has a handicap that is even greater than this, and that is his own limited capacity to understand the essential nature of the

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forces which are moving the present world. Here the difficulty is not only having to resist propaganda, and having access to insufficient information. It is that we all have a deficiency of imagination. Enormous errors have been made by those of us who are attempting to interpret current events, by the fact that our imaginations are unable to grasp the possibility of national or international orders based upon ideas, principles, and concepts which are totally different from any we ever have experienced. Or we make false interpretations, because our minds have been anticipating another course of events which seemed to be logical; or because we are unwilling to revise an interpretation of history that has come to be fixed in our minds, by education, as inevitable.

Let me give an illustration: One may have read "The Golden Bough," and one may have had an esoteric interest in totem and taboo; one may have intellectually admitted that there is an enormous residue of folklore and superstition underneath the superficial crust of civilization in the minds of the masses; we may have read Freud, especially his brilliant little essay "Unberhagen in der Kultur," and know, theoretically, that civilization has imposed upon men enormous restrictions of their primitive instincts, and that the revolt against these restrictions is constant in the subconscious; we may have read D. H. Lawrence without being the least bit shocked by his glorification of the instinctual, his blood mysticism. And yet when we see organized political forces starting out systematically to release the dark powers of the unconscious—to release the secondary sexual urges which civilization has spent hundreds of years in inhibiting—the instincts of aggression, and the twins, sadism and masochism; to revive folklore taboos and superstitions which an age of reason has thought were long since laughed away, our own intellectual conditioning is such that we cannot at first take it seriously; we grossly underestimate its power; our first tendency is to laugh at it and to think that we will conjure it away by appealing to reasonability and logic; and then we find that we have left something out of our calculations as a fundamental element in moving the masses, and we are just all wrong.

We are tied to words. We speak, for instance, of freedom. As civilized people, we think that the masses will deeply resent the suppressions of freedom of speech, the press, assembly, the independent courts, and the *institutions* of society to which we attach the adjective Free Institutions. We have failed utterly to realize that these are very superficial freedoms; that what has really restricted the liberty of man as an animal—and he is an animal in the first place—is civilization. The whole Ten Commandments are enormous restrictions on liberty. "Thou shalt not kill" is a restriction on liberty. The idea that you shall love your neighbor as yourself is positively acrobatic. It is against human nature. All civilization is against nature—that is its glory. But if anybody comes along and tells the masses that they no longer have to be civilized, he is offering them an incomparable freedom.

Of course the time comes when this freedom is lost altogether, through fear. Because barbarism grows, and finally every man is afraid of every other man, and so you reach the total resubjection and total slavery by fear.

But the average journalist is not a psychologist and therefore, as I have said, he fails to grasp the significance and power of slogans and movements that seem to him irrational. To have to be the interpreter of the irrational is an enormous task for those of us who have believed that man is a rational animal. I can follow the Marxian revolution with my reason. But it was not until I reread Dostoievsky's "Possessed," that I began to understand the latter phase of the communist revolution in Russia and the essential nature of the revolution of nihilism in Germany.

So that the interpreter of contemporary history today is carried very far afield in his effort to know something about the forces moving in the titanic times in which he lives. He ought to be a biologist. Maybe a study of the habits of the fighting fish of Siam would throw some light. He also ought to be a psychologist; he ought to have a prodigious knowledge of past history—just at this moment, for instance, something tells me that it is essential that I should sit down and read the history of the Thirty Years War. But above all, we ought to be poets—that is to say, we need the intuitive imagination of the great poets, to comprehend in even a small way the nature of the forces that are moving the world. Since none of us has these qualifications, all that we can do is to record little detached and piecemeal bits of the picture; records of behavior under given conditions; statistics which are a form of symbol other than the word, for expressing some phase of human activity; we cannot get sufficient minutiae of behavior to cast a really white light on any dominant personality. The picture that the great collective enterprise of journalism presents from day to day is inaccurate, influenced, oblique, and invariably percolated through subjective prejudices; perhaps the most important thing about it is that it records not what is happening but what a considerable group of fairly well educated, pretty trained observers, think is happening. That also is not without value. Perhaps somewhere in all the millions of words that are being written by journalists through this epoch, some time, somebody may find the essential clue.

The foregoing article is slightly condensed from Dorothy Thompson's address at the P.E.N. Congress on May 10. Other outstanding papers read at the Congress will be presented in next week's issue of The Saturday Review.

The Hollywood Nobody Knows

THE DAY OF THE LOCUST. By Nathanael West. New York: Random House. 1939. $2.

Reviewed by GEORGE MILBURN

IT is hard to understand why Nathanael West should ever have become (borrowing that dark term Bernard DeVoto once used on me) a "coterie writer." The comedy of his novel about forlorn clowns should make it popular, because it has the same ineffable appeal which caused millions to go to see Charlie Chaplin. But the chances are that comparatively few readers will greet this novel by the author of "Miss Lonelyhearts" with the enthusiasm it deserves.

This is too bad. Mr. West's latest book is about the Hollywood nobody knows, except for an occasional resolute explorer who has straggled back from there. It has very little to tell about the motion picture industry as such, although one of the main characters is a studio employee, and there is one memorable chapter about his getting lost in the maze of a movie lot—the only passage in fiction I know of like it is Stephen Dedalus's vision of hell.

It is, for the most part, the story of a lost bookkeeper from Iowa and his curious misadventures among the ordinary followers of an extraordinary industry: a cocksure dwarf, a purple cowboy, a dying vaudeville comedian, a luscious little extra, Mme. Jenning and her cote of dry-cleaned doves, a Hollywood landlady whose hobby is funerals, a repulsive child actor and his even more monstrous mother—all against a Hogarthian background of food faddists, aged perverts, and religious fanatics.

The worst fault of the book is that it follows the choppy, episodical technique of a movie scenario. It has that peculiar disorganization that most movies have. Maybe this was deliberate on the part of the author; if so, I think it was ill-advised. The story, for example, is not long enough to carry the shifting back and forth from the lives of Tod Hackett, the studio designer, to Homer Simpson, the Iowa bookkeeper, without losing force. And the reader is likely to wonder why so much space was given to an irrelevant visit to a brothel, interesting though it is, if Tod Hackett's excursions among brain-breathers and other odd cults are to be passed by with only the briefest mention. This gives "The Day of the Locust" an effect of hasty, disjointed writing that may disappoint some people.

But when Mr. West really gives a scene all he's got, it is something that will stick in your memory for a while. His description of the cockfight, or of the old clown's funeral, or of Hackett's finding the dwarf —such chapters are miniature master-

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pieces. And the book ends on a crescendo, narrating what happens in a mob gathered for a Hollywood premiere, a picture of an American Walpurgis Eve that must make anyone who reads it feel that he was there, too, and remember it as vividly.

George Milburn is the author of "Catalogue" and several books of short stories.

Mexico from Two Points of View

AN EYE-WITNESS OF MEXICO. By R. H. K. Marett. New York: Oxford University Press. 1939. $3.

Reviewed by ERNEST GRUENING

MR. MARETT is a detached and cultured Britisher whose seven years in Mexico was spent variously as business man—in railroading, mining, and oil—as a correspondent, and as amateur archeologist. In addition, he fell in love with and married a Mexican girl—one of the *ancien régime.* These varied approaches give his observations parallax; his loss of employment through oil expropriations has not warped his perspective. Indeed, he is at considerable pains to make the reader aware of his possible conditioning. The result is a personal narrative which reflects the intellectual honesty and broad sympathies of the author, whose interest in the Mexican scene had led him earlier to publish a useful handbook entitled "Archeological Tours from Mexico City." As an employee of the once British-owned Mexicano Railroad, Mr. Marett notes the record 11¾ per cent stock dividend paid in 1880 and contrasts these halcyon capitalist days with the present "exploitation" of "that involuntary philanthropist, the British investor." But at the same time he realizes that in that era the humble Mexican was an outcast in his own land and was employed only "at meager wages in jobs of the lowest category."

Mr. Marett's most valuable eye-witnessing is the account of the sweeping land expropriations in the cotton-growing region of "La Laguna." His judgment, formed as a reporter for the London *Times,* is that while the experiment is not entirely without hopeful features, especially in the field of education, the land divisions were carried out too hastily, that skilled organization was lacking, that government funds supplied to the new peon landholders were inadequate, and that these shortcomings, coupled with general mismanagement, are likely to destroy the productiveness of this region, and with it the program of social and economic emancipation for its agricultural workers. It is regrettable that this study of so important a phase of Cardenas's agrarianism is not more complete.

If it cannot be said that this is an important contribution to the swelling literature on Mexico, it is well written, readable, and honest.

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Quakers in Russia

WE DIDN'T ASK UTOPIA: A Quaker Family in Soviet Russia. By Harry and Rebecca Timbres. New York: Prentice-Hall. 1939. $2.50.

Reviewed by DAVID H. POPPER

NO, Harry and Rebecca Timbres didn't ask for Utopia, and they didn't find it. Unlike Eugene Lyons, who approached the promised land as an enthusiastic believer and was progressively disillusioned, they went to the Soviet Union with full knowledge of the difficulties they were certain to encounter. They had done famine relief work there in 1922, and Harry had passed through in 1930, during an interlude in his five years of public health work in India. By every material standard, they found, the country's growth had been enormous. But there was far more to be done; and with that admirable strain of practical idealism which characterizes so many American Quakers they determined to devote their skill and energies to the advancement of the great social experiment with which their sympathies lay.

Obstacles arose on every hand. Dr. Harry Timbres offered the Soviets the benefit of his experience and training in the control of malaria, but Moscow officialdom seemed none too eager for the gift. It took seven weeks of frenzied wire-pulling for him to secure a Soviet passport, and more than three months for Rebecca and the two little girls to overcome sufficient red tape to join him in October 1936. True pioneers, the family found work in the medical establishment of a remote new settlement on the Volga, where important paper and pulp industries were being established. Both adults worked on the same basis as the natives, while the children attended the local schools. For months they could not succeed in living on their salaries. They shared bad housing and the shortage of food and every variety of consumer's goods with their colleagues; and participated in the trade union democracy and the simple kindnesses and pleasures of the locality almost as if they had been there from the beginning.

And then, eleven months after his arrival, Dr. Harry was fatally stricken with typhus and the adventure ended—to be recorded only in the memory of his associates and in the collection of letters and excerpts from the family journal which make up this book. It is an intensely human document, containing many a laugh and many a tear and above all the ring of absolute honesty. The Timbres family were not disappointed or frustrated by the restraining hand of the Communist dictatorship because it never touched them at a vital spot. They found it easy to accept the official explanation of the great purge and to welcome the new Soviet constitution as an epochal document without inquiring into the discrepancy between pronouncement and practice. If objective criticism in the sphere of political philosophy was stifled, that was not important. What really mattered was the extension of democratic participation in industrial and local affairs and the rapid work of construction and improvement all over the country. As long as these continued, the Timbres could not lose their faith in socialism.

It may be that this view is correct, that we struggle unduly over political shibboleths instead of striving for concrete, immediate improvement. That, it would appear, is how the Russians themselves feel as they judge their government by its accomplishments. But whether you sympathize with the actions of that government or not, you will not fail to be deeply stirred by this day-to-day description of the development of a people. You will acquire what Walter Duranty, in his brief introduction, thinks Harry Timbres would want to give you: "kinder and deeper understanding of the USSR, apart from power and politics, in terms of human hope and work, in order to make tomorrow more happy, bright, and wholesome than today."

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Year of Tension

THE WORLD OVER: 1938. Edited by Joseph Hilton Smyth and Charles Angoff. A Living Age *annual. New York: Harrison-Hilton Books, Inc.,* 1939. $4.

Reviewed by CHARLES McD. PUCKETTE

THE world's events are put into differing time capsules; the radio commentator does the high spots of the last few hours, the newspaper records the day, the news-magazine the week, the annual volume the year, and eventually the historian deals with the generation, century, or era. The annual volume has long been with us. Originally it was formal and stodgy. More recently the news-magazine style has been employed with varying success. Now comes the first of a projected series of annual volumes which tells the happenings of the year by nations, first in news bulletin style in chronological order, and then in an interpretive summary. Mr. Smyth, who is editor of the *Living Age,* and Mr. Angoff, contributing editor of the *North American Review,* are the joint authors.

The survey characterizes 1938 as "the year of tension"—so too is 1939, unless it should turn out to be something worse. The authors undertake to cover "political and economic developments as well as happenings of a broader cultural import." This last ingredient seems to be present only in small quantity, though it may be answered that 1938 was a bad year for things of cultural import. The value of the book, the authors think, may lie in the service it will render (if war comes) in giving to the historian the "nature of the civilization that provoked it as well as the imponderable values that were at stake or were sacrificed."

The book divides itself into two parts much as does a newspaper. The chronological review month by month in the back is the news—brief, bulletin-like paragraphs country by country. The first, or interpretive section, corresponds to the editorials, though it by no means reflects decided policies or views. The prevailing tone of such comment as takes on any point of view is on the moderately liberal side on issues such as Hagueism, Nazism, and race prejudice. The interpretations show an agreeable degree of fairness even on our national politics.

Compilers of such digests always are faced by a dilemma. How shall they tell their story? The chronological style is easy, though in a year in which the outstanding events were international, to give the narrative by countries is to invite repetition under the different headings. The authors have met this as well as could be done; in the Czecho-Slovakian crisis the main story, in the interpretive section particularly, is told under the heading Great Britain as an appeasement to the reader.

Despite the overshadowing importance of European affairs in 1938, one feels that

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the space given to the United States in the interpretive pages has been somewhat skimped. There does not seem to be adequate reference to the backgrounds of labor and social questions which confronted the nation. The authors' style is crisp and clear, and the volume probably will find a wide use as a work of reference. But if only we could have a summary of a year's news as thrilling as this with peace, instead of war, holding the center of the stage!

The Old Circuit

CHAUTAUQUA CARAVAN. By Marian Scott. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co. 1939. $3.

Reviewed by JOHN R. SCHULTZ

THE circuit Chautauqua has come and gone. For the first third of this century its brown tents rose in hundreds of towns from coast to coast, from June to September, and hundreds of thousands of people trooped to the canvas auditoriums for music, lectures, and plays, to be instructed and entertained. Mrs. Scott tells the story of these days from the viewpoint of a professional, not one who came casually to a single season, to do a part and get it over. She began her training with an eye to the Chautauqua stage (it had to be called platform in the early days) and made her appearance in a Shakespeare play the season of 1916. From then until 1927 she worked every summer either in plays or entertainments with her husband (whom she acquired on the circuit) with Lyceum engagements in the winter.

In "Chautauqua Caravan" she relates her varied experiences in full. We face her audiences, sympathetic or hostile. We travel with her through dust and storm. We learn the difficulties of making dates despite seeming impossibilities, and of performances given under almost incredible conditions. And she loved it all. She had ambitions for no other stage and gave herself sincerely to her work. In the crude oil towns of Texas and the dust-blown settlements of Oklahoma she gave her performances with the same enthusiasm as in the shaded villages of Indiana and Illinois.

Much of the book concerns her Lyceum tours, which, except for conditions of travel, is another story. The result, therefore, is not exclusively a book on Chautauqua, but the autobiography of a Chautauqua trouper. A reader may finish the book without a clear understanding of what made the wheels go around on the circuits or what these annual programs meant to the people in the towns. Yet all the details of tents and personnel are correct and vivid, and there is none of the pose of superiority that frequently mars the writing of some who have tried to put the story into print.

Mr. Schultz is dean of men at Allegheny College.

Not the book of the year

Not even the book-of-the-month

But, just the same, a novel that will, I feel confident, please and repay perhaps a thousand or two readers of the Saturday Review.

The *New Republic* calls it "talent wasted on an unimportant theme." Well, suppose it is. In these unholy days you probably couldn't, even if you would, spend all your time reading about only important matters. A good novel without a purpose other than to entertain isn't necessarily to be damned.

But Ralph Thompson (you know his paper) says "The theme may be a slight one, but it was not too small for Homer and Chaucer centuries ago and it is still large enough to amuse and even annoy."

A great mid-Western paper calls it "a curious and effective blend of James M. Cain and Noel Coward . . . strikingly original."

And our own *New Yorker* says it is "written with a pleasing ironic detachment and in a style reminiscent of Hemingway's 'A Farewell to Arms' [not a bad book that] though without the pathetic ending."

So, ladies and gentlemen, in these days when one can publish a first novel by a new writer without causing even a moment's flutter in the bookshops, I can—and do—quite conscientiously urge you to give

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a chance to amuse, entertain, and—who knows?—perhaps even annoy you. If your bookseller or library hasn't it and doesn't get it for you promptly please let me know—for I like this book uncommonly well and want you to share my discovery of this new talent.

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Children by Choice

THE CHOSEN BABY. By Valentina P. Wasson. New York: Carrick & Evans. 1939. $1.50.

Reviewed by ROBERT O. BALLOU

WHEN the child who is a part of the usual family pattern asks his mother or father the ages-old, never completely answered question, "Where did I come from?" the answer is comparatively simple—or complex, depending largely upon the emotional content with which the parent's knowledge is mixed. But when the foster parent is asked the same question, a new element enters into his consideration of the answer. How much of the story of the adoption can he tell the child? When and how shall it be told?

Dr. Wasson has answered the last question beautifully and simply in a story book designed to be read to children under five years of age. The simple and casual telling of how Peter (and later Peter's little sister) came to be the son of a man and woman "whose one trouble" (until they got Peter), "was that they had no babies of their own," and the charmingly whimsical, yet real, pictures by Hildegard Woodward, make the matter just another fascinating story for the child, like "Snow White" or "Little Red Riding Hood," with the added advantage (if he is fortunate enough to be one of those children whose parents "picked" him on account of his obviously charming personality, instead of having to be contented with whatever they got by chance) that it is about himself.

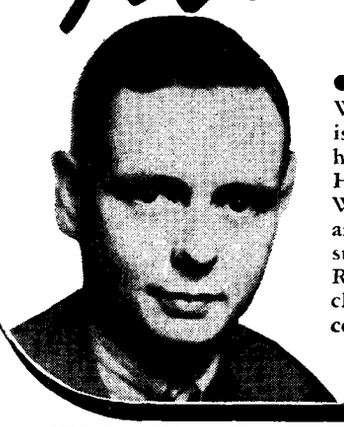
Any parent who has had the not-to-be-forgotten experience of telling this story in a casual, matter-of-fact way as Dr. Wasson has, will vouch for the success of her method. He will have seen the wide-eyed, fascinated attention of which only a child is capable, will have heard the interested questions, devoid of all harmful self-consciousness. And if he has been especially fortunate, he will have rejoiced in seeing evidences of a feeling of actual distinction in the child, of an especial importance which ordinary children do not have.

Whether your child has been adopted (and the story told or untold) or is of the ordinary garden variety of progeny, he will love this story of Peter and his little sister. And if, by chance, he is among the hand-picked specialties and you have faltered before the responsibility of telling him about himself, here is at least half of the equipment necessary for the job at hand.

"The most able practitioner of the pure horror story writing today"—DONALD GORDON, *American News of Books*

THE Edge OF Running Water

by William Sloane



Author of TO WALK THE NIGHT

● Reviewing William Sloane's first novel, TO WALK THE NIGHT, the *N. Y. SUN* said: "It is as if Edgar Allan Poe had written one of his horror tales in the style of Ernest Hemingway." His new one, THE EDGE OF RUNNING WATER, is just as full of excitement and terror and romance—and the mysterious action of the story takes place on the shore of the Kennebec River, in a remote farmhouse in Maine. "The climax", adds Mr. Gordon, "is all any chill fan could wish." $2.50

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Science in Progress

Edited by GEORGE A. BAITSELL
Introduction by HARLOW SHAPLEY

"It is gratifying to obtain a volume such as this, in which the men who are actually doing the work and making new discoveries tell how these discoveries are made and wherein they are significant. 'Science in Progress' consists of ten National Sigma Xi Lectureships given in 1937-38, augmented and revised to include recent data. Though the writing is scientific, it is wholly comprehensible to those who are non-technically interested in science." *The Saturday Review of Literature.* A Scientific Book Club Selection. Illustrated. $4.00

YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS New Haven, Connecticut

★ ★

Digest of a Digest

THE FIRST MAGAZINE: A HISTORY OF THE GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE. By C. Lennart Carlson. Providence: Brown University. 1938. $3.

Reviewed by JOHN T. WINTERICH

ON the day of judgment Edward Cave will impose on godhead an awful responsibility—he invented the magazine. He initiated the name rather than the thing itself, but he adapted and improved on what he borrowed sufficiently to give him the stature of a pioneer. His purpose was "to give a Monthly View of all the News-Papers . . . to treasure up, as in a Magazine, the most remarkable Pieces." And early in 1731 (labeled January but appearing in February) the *Gentleman's Magazine* was born.

In the *Gentleman's*, therefore, Cave created not only the magazine but the digest, and Mr. Carlson, in turn, digests Cave's own accomplishment. His first purpose, of course, is to sketch the genealogy and development of Cave's idea, but in addition he categorizes and discusses the *Gentleman's* contents—its handling of pure news, parliamentary and other; its literary, critical, and scientific components; its use of miscellaneous material; its verse (and an appendix lists all the identifiable poets and their contributions); its ponderable share in furthering the career of Samuel Johnson.

An important and interesting chapter summarizes the first magazine's concern with America. "The completely heterogeneous nature of American material in the *Gentleman's* has a significance all its own," Mr. Carlson writes. "It is better testimony than items of a more uniform kind would have been to the catholicity of English interests in the Colonies."

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The New Books

Biography

FROM RAGTIME TO SWINGTIME. By Isidore Witmark and Isaac Goldberg. Furman. 1939. $3.50.

If eleven-year-old Jay Witmark had been "a model scholar in behavior" as well as in arithmetic, he would have received a medal for his mathematical prowess in 1883. Instead, he took as his reward a toy printing-press, and this press, set up in a bedroom of the Witmark home, started the Witmark boys—there were five of them—in the business that was to become M. Witmark & Sons, music publishers.

Isidore Witmark (it was "Isidor" until he added the fourteenth letter to quiet the somewhat superstitious apprehensions of the comedian, James Reilly, who inspired Isidore's first venture in playwriting), eldest of the five, tells the story of the family, of the publishing house, of several hundred eminences of music and the theater, in "From Ragtime to Swingtime." Mr. Witmark had the collaboration of Isaac Goldberg, and, at the death of Dr. Goldberg, Frank Owen assisted in completing these 400-odd printed pages of recollections. For the Jack Horners who like to pull out plum after plum of anecdote about performers, composers, and writers of the past fifty or sixty years, the book is a prime offering. As a reconstruction of part of a New York that was —and, more than one might suspect, still is—it's an interesting and entertaining document.

Simply as the tale of the Witmarks, who composed music, arranged it, played it, sang it, danced it, published it, and sold it, "From Ragtime to Swingtime" is a sympathetic and amusing revelation. As a sidelight on ragtime, from which swing developed—well, by now you may suspect that Mr. Witmark's reminiscences are material for a number of books. Pick the subject you prefer from the index, and track down the author's remembrances and observations.

R. A. S.

PAGES FROM A WORKER'S LIFE. By William Z. Foster. International Publishers. 1939. $2.50.

This is a book of personal experiences —a series of sketches from the life of the writer, but not about himself alone. Here, as in his long activities as a labor organizer and strike leader, he identifies himself with the whole working-class. He is the partisan of the workers against the capitalists. To him, the evil of the capitalist system is not so much a debatable belief as a perfectly obvious fact to be taken for granted. As one reads of his poverty-stricken childhood in a Philadelphia slum, and of what he encountered as a worker in factories and mines and as a sailor on the old square-riggers, one easily understands how he came to adopt that point of view. Yet there is little, if any, bitterness in these pages, and there is more than a little humor and amusement. In spite of the hardships which he suffered in the sailing ships, the "red" Foster recalls those days with a kind of fondness. There are brief stories of many famous strikes, and a collection of prison experiences. Thrice Foster was the Communist Party's candidate for President, and he closes his book with an affirmation of his faith that "more and more the Soviet Union is becoming the beacon light of hope to the oppressed toilers of the earth." The book is readable for its humanness, for even communists—though some may doubt it —are that way.

R. G. F.

Fiction

THE PERPLEXED HEART. By Angela du Maurier. Doubleday, Doran. 1939. $2.50.

If Rebecca herself, and an adoring cousin, had alternated in telling Rebecca's story, it might have read like this first novel by Daphne du Maurier's elder sister. But though Verona, this new Rebecca, is capable of warping other people's lives, as the first Rebecca warped Maxim de Winter's, Verona herself is not enough of a person to make her life worth writing. If Miss du Maurier had been able to analyze her thoughts and emotions more deeply, Verona might have stood for the restlessness of the modern woman and the strange paths along which it sometimes leads her. But, lacking her sister's gusto, Miss du Maurier is not able to write a successful romance; nor has she the subtlety to analyze a psychological situation. Therefore, although often titillating in episodes, Verona's story soon becomes a monotonous chronicle.

She married first for love, and her husband died. She married next out of pity, and the pity changed to boredom. Then she became one of the mistresses of Neil Conway, the gayest, most charming, and most versatile of London playwrights. When her passion for him reached the point of degradation, he cast her off. Therefore, she had many lovers. Finally reduced practically to the streets, she died of her privations.

Verona's story is thus as dreary as the vengefully virtuous could wish. But though her rake's progress is indeed a moral tale, its moral is too early and too easily comprehended, and the rake herself never engages the reader's sympathy.

K. S.

MASQUERADE. By Vincent Brun. Carrick & Evans. 1939. $2.50.

Love, laughter, and tragedy, in Fascist Italy, with a collection of amoral characters and a strong dash of violence at the end,—all of this would seem to offer the pattern for a thrilling date-line novel. The pattern is indicated clearly enough, but the novel has slipped away some-

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where in the making; what we have is a choppy, pointless, and longish anecdote which depends upon its determined gaiety to carry a story that just doesn't get told. The intended effect, of powerful international undercurrents just beneath a façade of bright lights, cafés, fencing wits, and toujours l'amour, must depend entirely upon the quality of the characters who do the fencing, the wit, the loving. And they are so unfortunately trivial a lot that the effect falls through; it matters not at all what happens to them. Writers who make use of the powerful forces of contemporary history will have to give us some characters who are, at the very least, not transparent against their background.

N. L. R.

HARVEST. By Jean Giono. Viking. 1939. $2.50.

One is impressed in reading this novel by Giono's attitude that one may take it or leave it; and it is an attitude of dignity, not of hard-boiled pose. This reflects the personal quality of Giono's talent, and it is indicative of a writer concerning whom any judgment is largely dependent upon individual taste.

"Harvest" is a brief story built upon the parable of a man living in a deserted village, who tires of eating the flesh of trapped animals, and, longing for the taste of bread, converts the weed-grown waste into flourishing wheatland. The parable involves his finding a woman, and such a story lends itself rather too easily to symbolism, in this case to a special brand of symbolism, in which one feels that the allegorical intention is expressed for its emotional overtones merely, and has no real significance. The scene, the French Basses-Alpes, is vividly convincing in color and sound, but the people suffer not only from their exaggerated role but from the fact that their lives actually represent such a small portion of the problem of modern man. For this reason, it is Giono's sincerity alone which prevents the book from being just a skillful dish of artistic *tourisme*.

It seems a pity that neither "Jean le Bleu" nor "Le Grand Troupeau" has been chosen for translation, for both these stories offer wider application: the first being reminiscences of a childhood in the slums of a Mediterranean city, and the second an account of life in the Giono country during the war. The scope and material of "Harvest" are disappointing because the author has a vigorous talent, agreeably free of aridity and self-consciousness, equipped with a command of imagery which is really individual, practical like the farmers of whom he writes, and based on the rhythm and idiom of spoken not literary speech. These things make one regret that, at the point of development of "Harvest," Giono seems to remain too much of a "natural," and to require the discipline of a background less rich in picturesque values, of material which has greater social variety, if he is to become more important than the object of a special enthusiasm.

I. W. A.

History

VIENNA. The Biography of a Bygone City. By Henry Dwight Sedgwick. Bobbs-Merrill. 1939. $3.75.

After reading at least a dozen books in the past year on the downfall of Austria, one turns with distinct pleasure to a volume that pictures the glory of Vienna in the days before Herr Hitler crossed the frontier. For Vienna, perhaps more than any capital in Europe, is a city of ghosts; its greatness ended with the war, but its very name conjures a hundred famous men and women who have dominated the life and thought of the Western world. Mr. Sedgwick, always an understanding interpreter of the Middle Ages, recalls in this interesting "biography" the gay and charming Vienna that many Americans have known and many more have wanted to know. This is no formal and footnoted history of municipal administration or imperial politics, but a gracious, digressive, and admiring tribute to a magnificent city and to the countless statesmen and artists whom it has sheltered.

From Richard Coeur-de-Lion to Kurt Schuschnigg, both of whom were captured and imprisoned in Vienna, this narrative wanders amiably through the centuries. Mr. Sedgwick stops here for a few pages on the Thirty Years War, there for chapters on Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, and Beethoven, and again for the baroque, the theater, and the waltz, and then for the unhappy reign of Francis Joseph and Elizabeth. Many excellent photographs

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OFF WITH HER HEAD *G. D. H. and Margaret Cole* (Macmillan: $2.)	Severed female head found in rooms of Oxford student flutters scholarly dovecotes no end until Insp. Fairford observes the obvious.	There being not much doubt about killer's identity, one turns to atmosphere and background—and both prospects are pleasing.	Minor Cole

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enhance the brief biographies, anecdotes, poems, and letters. The author reminds us, and Hitler also, that Vienna has been besieged, invaded, and annexed many times—by the Turks and the French, for example — but has always outlived its conquerors. Only a few final pages are devoted to the unhappy days after the war, when Austria was stripped of its resources and Vienna of its power, and to the capitulation only a year ago to a native of Austria who once inhabited—and detested—the city. One constantly wishes that Mr. Sedgwick could have touched upon some of the more prosaic problems of Vienna and upon the life of the humbler folk outside the Hapsburg court, but realizes that it is difficult enough to mention only the high points in seven or eight centuries in the life of an imperial capital.

J. F. G.

International

THE CONQUEST OF A CONTINENT. By Chase S. Osborn and Stella Brunt Osborn. Privately printed. 1939. $3.

This is surely one of the most curious books of the current publishing season. A former governor of Michigan, whose log-hut home is within a few yards of the United States-Canada border, and his adopted daughter, who is a native of Canada, have collaborated on a book that traces the history of the dividing line between the two countries. The book is curious in subject matter, and it also contains many curious facts.

For instance, that the boundary line between Canada and the United States is the longest international "fence" in the world—5,526 miles in extent. "Its length is roughly equivalent to the distance from New York to Jerusalem, from London to Cape Town, from Seattle to Shanghai." It is marked or referenced by 8,060 monuments. It has been in process of building for over a century. It takes a fairly large crew of "trouble shooters" ten years to give the line one going over along its entire course, to repair the monuments and clear the thirty-foot "vistas" through wooded areas.

The book is crowded with factual material of this kind, much of it so curious that, although it has been dug up out of scores of dry official documents, it is interesting in its very nature, without literary embellishment. And the detailed story of the slow building of the line through various treaties over a period of a century or more is of some historical significance, at least as a summary.

The spiritual significance of this "peace fence" between the two countries has often been celebrated. The boundary is less often thought of as an actual physical "fence." Therefore, the description of it as such makes a story that has the interest of novelty.

The title of the book may appear at first glance to be misleading. Actually it is apt. This long, unfortified boundary line is the truest possible symbol of the conquest of the North American continent by the two nations occupying most of its territory. They have conquered the continent because they have learned to live in peace as neighbors. That international "fence" is the symbol of their neighborliness. As Robert Frost's farmer remarked, "Good fences make good neighbors."

A. M.

Miscellaneous

INFORMATION, PLEASE! Edited by Dan Golenpaul. Simon & Schuster. 1939. $1.60.

This radio program, excellent in spots and spotty in others, is so familiar that one need record here only that the present compilation is based on the first thirty-five weekly sessions which Franklin P. Adams and John Kieran, plus sundry assisting targets for Clifton Fadiman's barrages of queries, have made memorable. Happily for the publishers, questions and answers alike are readily forgettable, so that faithful followers of the broadcast will find in this recapitulation the excitement of fresh venture.

J. T. W.

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Double-Crostics: No. 269

By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY

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	16-S	17-J	18-V	19-T	20-M		21-H	22-J	23-B	24-X	25-F	26-O	27-A	28-V	29-N	30-E	
31-G	32-L	33-J	34-M		35-W	36-M	37-J	38-Y	39-V	40-F	41-K		42-X	43-H	44-O	45-P	46-U
	47-F	48-E		49-U	50-J	51-R	52-G	53-W	54-N	55-C		56-X	57-C		58-C	59-F	60-A
	61-O	62-Q	63-T	64-A	65-L		66-D	67-R	68-U	69-E		70-K	71-C	72-W	73-G	74-H	75-B
76-D		77-S	78-L	79-N		80-W	81-F	82-D	83-Y	84-A	85-J	86-K	87-H	88-N		89-T	90-V
91-C	92-P		93-B	94-S	95-R		96-B	97-M	98-E		99-A	100-C		101-U	102-B	103-A	104-N
105-O		106-I	107-G	108-M	109-J		110-C	111-Y	112-D	113-F	114-I		115-N	116-R	117-L	118-C	
119-Q	120-X	121-L	122-R	123-H	124-U	125-E	126-D		127-I	128-U		129-B	130-G	131-S	132-Q	133-D	134-H
	135-A	136-E	137-U	138-V		139-L	140-K		141-S	142-N	143-X		144-T	145-P	146-R	147-L	148-M
	149-C	150-A	151-F	152-K		153-B		154-J	155-N	156-X		157-T	158-A	159-W	160-R	161-E	162-Q
	163-U	164-K	165-P	166-D	167-Q		168-V	169-R	170-U	171-Y	172-K		173-S	174-L		175-B	176-S
177-F		178-R	179-I	180-U	181-H	182-K											

DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle, you must guess twenty-five words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. The key letters in the squares are for convenience, indicating to which word in the definitions each letter in the diagram belongs. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is Webster's New International Dictionary (second edition).

The solution of last week's *Double Crostic* will be found on page 21 of this issue.

DEFINITIONS

A. Pseudonym of H. B. Stowe (surname).

B. Hookedness.

C. Pseudonym of "Salmagundi" (1807) (surname).

D. Poltroon.

E. Process of developing new set of feathers.

F. Celtic inhabitants of Ireland.

G. Young member of Strigiformes family.

H. Conspicuously.

I. Struck with a slight audible blow.

J. Characterized by counsel.

K. Flagrant.

L. Art of improving memory.

M. Gilbert and Sullivan opera.

N. Historic character in Henry IV, pt. 1.

O. Hebrew prophet.

P. Fleshy underground stem.

Q. Irish poet (1865-1939).

R. Biblical patriarch.

S. Lightless.

T. Worthless bauble.

U. Badly born (comp.).

V. Author of "Sea Gull."

W. Derives from premises.

X. Rosy, radiant.

Y. Small salamander.

WORDS

84 158 99 135 103 150 60 27 64

153 129 23 75 96 102 175 93

149 91 118 55 57 58 71 100 110

76 112 166 66 82 133 126

125 98 161 69 48 136 30

40 177 4 113 59 47 81 151 25

107 31 73 130 52

87 123 134 74 43 181 21

127 179 106 114

85 37 109 154 50 33 22 17 15

182 70 13 152 172 86 140 164 41

121 139 117 11 174 78 32 147 65

6 108 36 97 20 3 34 148

88 142 104 54 79 155 115 29 5

61 44 105 26 2

92 45 9 165 145

162 62 132 167 119

122 1 178 67 95 51 160 169 146 116

77 131 176 94 173 141 16

157 12 19 144 63 89

170 49 101 180 68 163 128 137 46 10 124

168 90 39 8 138 18 28

53 7 35 159 72 80

42 120 24 156 14 56 143

171 111 38 83

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DOUBLEDAY, DORAN

Trade Winds

BY P. E. G. QUERCUS

BY the way, mused old Ponderous, another character who always carried an umbrella, and was chaffed about it, was Chesterton's *Father Brown* —who usually got the better of them in the end. ☞Exagmining the show of works by James Joyce in the window of the Gotham Book Mart it occurred to us that if we were the manager of the Childs restaurants we would display at the cashier's desk of each branch a copy of *Haveth Childer's Everywhere*. ☞A good lampside book, even if you only wanted it to preserve James Thurber's piece about E. B. W. (*Saturday Review*, Oct. 15, 1938) is the *1939 Essay Annual* (Appleton-Century, $2) edited by Erich A. Walter of the University of Michigan. ☞While doing some literature palaver at a suburban college, Old Q. assigned to a student the job of finding out the meaning of the name of a mysterious station on the Rockaway branch of the L. I. R. R. That station, which always puzzled us, is called *The Raunt*. ☞Our conscientious pupil first tried to buy a ticket to The Raunt, but was told it was only used in summertime. She ensued with study of dictionaries, finally identifying the word (Old Scots, we think) as meaning (appropriately) a young female fish. Are there any philology experts who can confirm this for us? ☞Bennett Book Studios, 41 West 57, N. Y. C., claim to have settled a moot bibliographical point concerning the first issue of the 1885 *Huckleberry Finn*. They offer for $750 a copy showing the offending plate on p. 283 as it appeared prior to sabotage in the press room. ☞Don't ask us to go into this in detail, it's a matter for Mark Twain specialists. ☞The same catalogue from Bennett speaks of Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* as "one of the really great American pivotal period books." ☞Winifred H. Clark, who was with Farrar & Rinehart for 9 years, says her experiment as Roving Secretary (143-16 Sanford Ave., Flushing, N. Y.) has been both busy and interesting. Some days she is on the road picking up MSS or returning them; other days she is steadily at the keyboard. Every day is different, and she believes the profession of peregrine typist has a happy future. ☞Sumner Putnam of Farrar & Rinehart says his firm is about to publish Baroness Ishimoto's translation of *Wheat and Soldiers*, which was so interestingly mentioned by our correspondent in Japan (Trade Winds, May 13). An unusual catalogue idea was that of Norman Alexander Hall, Newton Centre, Mass., who classifies authors by the colleges they attended. ☞One of the most genuinely remarkable books of last winter was *M*, 1000 Autobiographical Sonnets by Merrill Moore. We do not pretend to have done more than spoor about in this wealthy volume, but we expect to go on doing so for a long time. If we were a publisher it would give us a genuine pride to have had a hand in a book so honest, so fresh, so blunt and tender and surprising. ☞It would interest old Phasgocyte Q. to get, some day, (no hurry) a letter from some publisher about what book he is enormously and spiritually proud of having published: preferably during the past year; and why he is so proud. ☞Or better still, what book published by some other house he would have been proud to imprint. ☞This might lead into all sorts of jovial confitebors. ☞An exhibition to show the work of composers, painters, sculptors and writers who have attended the MacDowell Colony (Peterboro, N. H.) opened May 10 at the MacDowell Club, 166 E. 73, N. Y. C., and will continue through the summer. The exhibition will be on view every afternoon, 1 to 5 p. m., and the proceeds of the sale of work by colonists will go toward repairing the damages done by last September's hurricane. The Colony will be unable to open this summer on account of the fire hazard caused by debris. ☞The most unusual thing about the story of the kidnapping of George Palmer Putnam was that for the first time in our knowledge a news dispatch from Southern California alluded to the fact it was raining.

The A. B. A. Convention

☞The 39th annual convention of the American Booksellers Association opened with a cruise up the Hudson and down the East River last Sunday, aboard the *Chauncey M. Depew*, chartered for the occasion. The trip up the Hudson took in the Atlantic Fleet, anchored here for the World's Fair, with Admiral Yates Stirling speaking on the importance of naval power. Carl Carmer offered a brief talk on the history of the Hudson and its famous landmarks. The *Chauncey M. Depew* then returned down the North River, around the Battery, and towards the new Whitestone Bridge. The sail ended at 6:30 p. m. Total take, 560 passengers.

☞On Monday the Convention settled down to business, with discussion of Trade Problems. At lunch Morris Ernst made an eloquent plea for the continuation of the low postage rate on books, a proposal which the *SRL* heartily endorses. Edna Ferber made a speech urging that books be regarded neither as preciosities nor as merchandise—that they are as indispensable, and should be as common, as bread and water. ☞A Putnam salesman was spotted in the Pennsylvania lobby, during Monday's bright sunshine, carrying an umbrella. The story is that all the Putnam boys must carry 'em while soliciting advance orders for Neville Chamberlain's *In Search of Peace*.

☞Monday night's most attractive parlor game, "On Consignment." As described in the program—"shoot the dart, at the circles marked with the publishers' names. The object is to stick publishers, and you win. It makes no difference whether you stick different publishers or the same one." ☞The *SRL* had regretfully to go to press before it could report Booksellers' Day at the World's Fair (Tuesday) and the Annual Banquet of Wednesday evening.

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